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Chinese, Urdu Turkish . . .

Language classes are
making Washington a city
of many tongues

A YOUNG MAN stepped into a bus in downtown Washington, sat down, and took out a "Spoken Chinese" text from his attache case. His 20-minute ride to the Library of Congress would give him just enough time to review some dialogues.

Entering the classroom, he greeted his fellow-students—a retired army officer, several government analysts, a college professor, a housewife and a truck driver. The instructor, a native of China, led the class in a lively discussion of how to cook a Peking duck. "Third Year Chinese," offered by the Department of Agriculture's Graduate School, was underway.

In any 24-hour period, well over a hundred such language programs are carried on under government, academic and private auspices. Although it turns out few industrial products, Washington is one of the world's leading cities in linguistic training.

Before most Washingtonians start their day's work, diplomats and other government employees are busy mastering French, Spanish, German, Italian, Portuguese and Russian in classes at Arlington Towers in nearby Arlington. Sponsored by the State Department's Foreign Service Institute, the classes are held from 7:30 to 8:45. The Institute also conducts regular daytime classes in more than 40 tongues, ranging from French and Italian to Serbo-Croatian

By JACOB ORNSTEIN

and Bambara, an African language.

At the Defense Language Institute (East Coast Branch) in Anacostia naval and military personnel, and selected Federal employees, put in arduous eight-hour days attacking Russian, Chinese, Turkish, Arabic, German, French, Italian or Portuguese, to name a few. By graduation time the learners are expected to be able to welcome a group of foreign ship's officers on board, carry on cocktail party "chitchat," or translate an editorial from a newspaper in the "target" language.

Some government agencies hire instructors and allow selected employees to study a foreign language during working hours. This is the case at the Bureau of Standards where specialists learn to read Russian from a George Washington University instructor, who comes to the premises twice weekly.

Georgetown University's Institute of Languages and Linguistics, set up by the late Rev. Edmund Walsh in 1949, has become a leader in modern techniques of instruction and the use of electronic equipment. Georgetown has tapes in 42 languages, and students can major in any one of nine leading world tongues.

A new language laboratory at Howard University with soundproof booths and the latest electronic devices serves students of the expanding Romance Language Department and other divisions. Howard's African Language and Area Center is one of only a half dozen in the country devoted to that continent. It offers training in Swahili, Yoruba and Tswana, and related anthropological and social studies.

Increased emphasis on language skills also is seen at Maryland, George Washington, American and Catholic Universities. Trinity College, a girls'

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school, is one of the few small institutions in the country to offer Chinese, which is taught by a former missionary.

At the pre-college level St. Albans Boys School offers four straight years of Russian, while some Russian is taught in a number of other private and public high schools.

The number of commercial concerns offering language classes here is legion. The best known of these is the Berlitz Schools of Languages, one of a worldwide chain, while most of the others are local. All told, these schools offer well over a hundred foreign tongues, mostly by native instructors.

Private tutoring also is available here, as a look at the classified ads shows, and courses are taught at the YMCA, the YWCA and the District Recreation Department in French, Spanish, Russian and Hebrew at less than a dollar per hour. Residents of the District are entitled to free courses in French, Spanish and Latin offered at several high schools by the Board of Education.

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